

Tapioca (Cassava)

Tapioca is the second largest foreign currency earner after rice in the farm sector and it is one of the top 10 export items.

Cassava roots are grown primarily in the Eastern and Northeastern regions and are used for processing into tapioca products, including hard pellets, chips and flour. The majority of tapioca products are processed into tapioca pellets, for the manufacture of animal feed.

Most tapioca products are exported overseas to the European Community consisting of 90% of total exports. The remainder goes to the U.S.S.R., Korea, Japan and Israel. Thailand still maintains a high surplus. The Ministry of Commerce has introduced an export system to encourage tapioca exports to other markets.

During the last decade, export volume and value of tapioca products has fluctuated widely. Prices have been susceptible to oversupply, whereas volume has been susceptible to a decline in the output of other agricultural products like maize which is used as a tapioca substitute in manufacturing animal feed.

Rubber

The rubber industry is the third largest foreign currency earner in the farm sector. Thailand is also the world's third largest natural rubber producer after Malaysia and Indonesia. Its share of world rubber production has risen from 14.6% in 1983 to 18.2% in 1988. Rubber is Thailand's fifth largest export item. The largest importer is Japan (45%), while other major importers are China, the United States and Singapore.

Rubber has also played a vital role in Thailand's economy, with rubber product manufacturing rapidly emerging as one of the most promising sectors. Rubber prices have vastly improved from the record lows in 1982-1985, contributing to its rise as one of the top foreign currency earners in the farm sector.

Approximately 95% of Thailand's rubber trees are located in the southern provinces while the remaining 5% are located in the east. Programs are also being introduced to cultivate rubber production in the northeastern region with success. The areas around Loei and Nong Khai have yielded the best results.

Traditionally, Thailand's latex from trees has been processed into rubber sheets and blocks for export to manufacture car tires. Fresh latex is currently being made into a concentrated latex which is being used to produce rubber products like condoms, balloons, toys, electrical tape, paint, car mats and gloves.